Seminar on Himalayan Geology and Geophysics

248. SHRI KRISHAN LAL SHARMA: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that a seminar on Himalayan geology and geophysics was held at Dehradun recently;

(b) if so, the points stressed at the seminar; and

(c) the reaction of Government to the points raised at the seminar ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI KAMAL NATH) : (a) and (b) Yes Sir. The Seminar held at Dehradun from 22-25 March, 1993, stressed on various aspects of Himalayan Geology as well as on societal aspects such as earthquakes, landslide hazards and environment.

(c) The Government through its various Departments, National Laboratories and Universities are undertaking research investigations on several important problems of Himalayan Geology and on natural hazards.

Removal of travel restrictions by US

249. SHRI VIREN J. SHAH :
SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN :

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that the U. S. State Department have imposed the travel restrictions for US citizens visiting India in view of the terrorist attacks and if so, what are the details thereof;

(b) whether the Government of India or our Mission in U.S.A. have approached the U.S. Government to provide India with specific and credible information it had regarding potential terrorist acts; and

(c) what steps Government have so far taken for the safety of the lives of persons visiting India from abroad ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI R. L. BHATIA) : (a) In a public announcement on March 15, 1993, the US Department of State had encouraged US citizens to temporarily defer travel to New Delhi because of information that suggested there was a hightened threat of terrorism. This travel advisory was withdrawn on March 30, 1993.

(b) Yes, Sir.

(c) Government are fully committed to ensuring the safety of our citizens as well as visitors from abroad. Security measures in force and potential threats to law and order are constantly monitored and special measures taken from time to time in this regard.

Passport of suspected terrorist revoked

250. SHRI SHIV PRATAP MISHRA : Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government propose to revoke the passports held by Indian nationals who are suspected to be involved in terrorist activities or similar other offences;

(b) if so, the details of the rules in this regard; and

(c) if the answer to part (a) above be in negative the reasons therefor ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI R. L. BHATIA) : (a) and (c) Section 10(3) of the Passports Act 1967 lists the grounds on the basis of which passports can be impounded or revoked. Whenever information which satisfies the relevant provision of Section 10(3) is provided to the Government action is taken to impound or revoke the passports of the concerned individuals.

Seventh SAARC Summit

251. SHRI SHIV PRATAP MISHRA : Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that the Seventh SAARC Summit have approved the draft Dhaka declaration, envisaging a liberalised

intra-region trade and an action plan for poverty alleviation; and

(b) if so, the details thereof and the reaction of the Pakistan thereto ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI R. L. BHATIA) : (a) Yes Sir. The 7th SAARC Summit has finalised a framework Agreement on a SAARC Preferential Trading Arrangement (SAPTA). They have also adopted a consensus on eradication of poverty in South Asia.

(b) SAPTA envisages arrangements relating to tariff, paratariff, non-tariff and direct trade measures. Negotiation of tariff preferecnes will initially be on product-by-product basis. Least developed contracting States are protected by providing them wherever possible, special and more favourable treatment under this Arrangement which by an earlier decision of the 12th Council of Ministers, is to be made fully operational before December 1995.

The decisions relating to eradication of poverty in South Asia are based upon recommendations of the Independent South Asian Commission on Poverty Alleviation established at the Colombo Summit. The Dhaka Declaration commits member Governments to the eradication of poverty in South Asia, preferably by the year 2002 AD, through an Agenda of Action which embodies strategies of social mobilisation, decentralised agricultural development, small scale labour-intensive industrialisation and human development policies which emphasise the rights to work and to primary education.

Decisions in SAARC are unanimous. Pakistan was therefore as much party to the above decisions as other member States.

Fake Passports Racket

252. SHRI SUSHIL KUMAR SAMBHAJIRAO SHINDE :
SHRI MURLIDHAR CHANDRAKANT BHANDARE :
SHRIMATI VEENA VERMA :

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) whether a racket involving issue of fake passports with far reaching consequences, in facilitating the escape of terrorists and proclaimed criminals from the country has come to light;

(b) if so, what are the details indicating modus operandi thereof; and

(c) what action has since been taken and is being taken in the matter ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI R. L. BHATIA) : (a) and (b). Information regarding different rackets involving fake and fraudulent passports is received by the Government from time to time. Apart from the printing of counterfeit passports, these rackets inter alia include obtaining passports by submitting false or forged documentation; substituting photographs on the genuine passports; obtaining passports in false names; forging entries in genuine passports; obtaining passports by giving false information etc. Terrorists and proclaimed criminals might utilise these rackets.

(c) The Government has initiated steps to streamline the procedure for issue of passports and to improve the quality of the passport booklet to prevent tampering in order to deter the issue of fake and fraudulent passports. The Passports Act 1967 has been amended to provide for more stringent penalties for violations.

As and when specific cases come to the attention of the Government, necessary steps are taken under the law.

Implementation of Economic Oriented Foreign Policy

253. SHRI SUSHIL KUMAR SAMBHAJIRAO SHINDE :
SHRI MURLIDHAR CHANDRAKANT BHANDARE :
SHRIMATI VEENA VERMA :